THE LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Editor: R. PALME DUTT

Volume 5 December, 1923 Number 6

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A Review by H. P. R.

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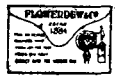

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NOTES of the MONTH

A Permanent Crisis—Unreal Tariff Issue—Labour Party's Lost Offensive—Bourgeoisie Recovers Initiative—A Political Throw-back—Result of Confused Leadership—A New Policy Daily—Coalition Danger—Capitalist Reconstruction Danger—Election Programme—A Real Programme Wanted

THE present General Electon is a signal that Britain is entering on a period of recurrent political crises. The Baldwin Government would not have plunged into a General Election unless it were compelled. No one likes General Elections, least of all a Government newly entered on power with a secure majority and years of life before it. Nor did that compulsion come from their followers, who were as much disconcerted and annoyed as any. It did not come from any powerful wave of feeling or sudden discontent in the country. Therefore the compulsion came solely from events, and nothing else. It was the bare force of events that drove the Government and their supporters and opponents, all equally against their will, into a sudden dissolution. The Baldwin Government was helpless before events and did not know what to do. It had tried its hand with France and had only made public its impotence. It looked at home and saw only the menace of the fourth winter of unemployment refusing to be exorcised. A miserable still-born infant of a proposal to spend a doubtful fifty millions on unemployment was brought forward and met with universal derision. The Baldwin Government gave up the insoluble puzzle and seized on the first pretext to dissolve.

SURRENDER in so few months is a very striking symptom of the helplessness of post-war British capitalism. It is impossible to treat the tariff issue as the serious occasion of the dissolution. The tariff issue was taken up with such complete confusion, vagueness, and halfheartedness, and only so slowly elaborated into any kind of form at all, as to suggest strongly that it came second in the order of thought and was left to be worked out later. Had the only object been import duties on manufactured

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articles, the Safeguarding of Industries Act was available and could easily have been adapted. Indeed it has been justly said that Britain was already Protectionist in practice and Free Trade in theory, and the only change proposed is that she should become Protectionist in theory and in practice as before. Hardly was the tariff proposal made than its own sponsors began to whittle it down and step away from the issues raised. Thus every indication reveals that what was being sought was not so much a tariff as a change—some change, any change. And here comes the most striking fact of all. For when all the forces of British capitalism are pushing towards a change in one form or another, the only actual forms of that change presented are, on the one hand, the resurrection of an antique fetish in a mangled condition and, on the other, the hoary form of Asquith rising from the sleep of the dead. These, then, are all the changes that capitalism has left to ring. Back to the old statesmen under whom the present crisis took shape and who have no remedies to cure it. Feverishly the dice-box is shaken again and again at ever shorter intervals for a fresh throw. In vain: from the dice-box of capitalism there are no more dice to fall.

BUT while the decay of capitalist energy and resource should be an occasion for rejoicing to the working class and the opportunity for pressing forward a successful attack, the actual situation is not so satisfactory. For if the hour of the capitalist has long since struck and they can only cumber the scene, the hour of the workers is here at hand and the workers are not ready. This is, indeed, the kernal of the whole situation, both in Britain and abroad, and the explanation of the present slow and long-drawn-out decline. The fact is that the present election was forced *on* the Labour Movement, instead of being forced *by* it. The experience of last year's election has been repeated. What was the position last year? Here was capitalism at a deadlock, its Government discredited and on the point of downfall, and an ever-growing sweep of opinion rallying to the Labour Party. And in the face of this, instead of the Labour Party taking the offensive and launching a vigorous attack to overthrow the Government, it failed so completely in this task that it was actually possible for a section of the existing discredited Government to step into the vacant place, first detaching itself for

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the purpose and then winning the credit of holding the Government up to obloquy and bringing it down. Thus capitalism was able to save itself; in place of the move to working-class politics, for which all was ready, power passed into the hands of a small extreme reactionary clique within capitalism.

ONCE again the same process has been repeated. The Baldwin Government was discredited and helpless and completely vulnerable to attack. But was the Labour Party pursuing this attack? On the contrary, it was supporting the Baldwin Government three months ago, declaring its enthusiastic approval of Baldwin and readiness to back him, because it actually imagined that he was pursuing in relation to France a policy which was in accordance with its own. Was the Labour Party doing anything to voice and arouse the anger of the unemployed and of the wage-cut workers against this Tory Prime Minister? On the contrary, the Labour Party was declaring through its official organ that Baldwin "has the British nation behind him." There was almost a universal sigh went up from the Labour leaders when it was discovered that their idol was giving himself over to the heresy of the tariff. Here at last their years of Liberal training compelled them to take up a position on the principle of Free Trade. Working-class principles might count for nothing. Troops in Germany to suppress the German workers counted for nothing. The starvation of the unemployed on the "gap" counted for nothing. Imperialist junketings and rhetoric and militarism won their applause. All this went with support of Baldwin. But the sound Liberal principle of Free Trade at last compelled their opposition. When was the vote of censure moved on the Baldwin Government? Only after the issue was over, after the Dissolution was fixed, after Baldwin had summoned MacDonald to him to arrange that a suitable Vote of Censure should be moved in order to give him the occasion for a Dissolution. Then the docile Parliamentary Group moved its Vote of Censure and found it was too late. The issue was already fixed. Once again the extreme reactionaries had taken the offensive first and made the issue. The discredited Baldwin Government was able to come forward as the challenging Party and not the Labour Party.

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WHAT is the result of this historic failure? The result is a complete throwback in the political situation. At a time when every institution and policy of capitalism is impotent and bankrupt, when all the cards are in the Labour Party's hands, it is unable to play them, and the initiative remains with the bourgeoisie. At once, on this failure of the Labour Party to take the lead, comes the restoration of bourgeois politics and the old Liberal Party is revived to carry on its twenty-year-old controversy with the Conservative Party at the point where they last left off, and the Labour Party is to be relegated again to the third position. Every preparation is made for the re-establishment of a Liberal Government, which would have at any rate the tacit support of a considerable section of the Labour Party. The old bourgeois political issues dominate the situation afresh. The principal opponent, declares Birkenhead for the Tories, is no longer Socialism, but reunited Liberalism. Back to 1910 becomes actually the hope of capitalism in the political situation, when in every other direction the attempt to restore the pre-war position has failed. Such an attempt cannot succeed in view of the total situation: but it means that once again a hard and costly path has to be travelled by the working class to recover the lost ground.

WHAT is the reason of this weakness which has thus thrown back the position and held up the advance of the Labour Party? Partly it is actual shrinking from power and responsibility in the present situation, on the part of the leaders, which has led them to refrain from attacking the Government too vigorously. Partly it is actual personal implication in bourgeois politics and society, which has prevented them from standing clear, and in effect shut their mouths. Partly it is fear of the working-class forces behind them, if these should be roused to real attack. But all these may be summed up into one essential point—confusion of leadership. Confusion of leadership, inability to mark out a clear working-class policy and stick to it, inability to distinguish between a working-class and a bourgeois policy, running after every gust of bourgeois politics in turn, uncritical association with a hundred forms of bourgeois political and social activity (the recent occasion on which the Labour organ officially castigated the criminal

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tomfoolery of a banquet attended by Henderson and Thomas was only a striking example of the daily confusion)—all these have taken the edge off Labour's fight and prevented the effective rousing of the workers to a clear issue.

THE confusion of thought and policy runs right through the movement. It is hardly possible to name a single policy or a single issue which has not at some time been advocated by the Labour Movement or is not now being advocated in some way or by some particular leader—or indeed by the same individual leader on successive days. On November 11 Mr. MacDonald declared at Dewsbury: "I put foreign policy right in the forefront of my programme." On November 12 Mr. MacDonald declared at the Caledonian Road Baths: "The Labour Party was going to fight on the ground that the purchasing power of our own people was the dominating factor in the producing capacity of the country." In the same way in a single day's issue of the *Daily Herald* the following "solutions" for the industrial crisis were to be found on successive pages: (1) High wages on the American model—Mr. Hodges, the front page and the Editorial; (2) Foreign policy "first and foremost"—Mr. MacDonald, Leader of the Labour Party; (3) International financial unification "the most urgent step to end the world chaos"—the I.L.P., Mr. MacDonald's Party and the dominating force in the Labour Party; (4) Socialism—Mr. Brockway, the Secretary of the I.L.P. This is a single day's issue. If all the thrice-weekly programmes of the I.L.P., &c, to cure every ill in the world in a thousand different ways each day were brought together into a book, it would be only necessary to compile an index for sufficient comment. Is it surprising that in such a situation the Labour Party is unable to lead and is always in practice at the mercy of every stream of bourgeois politics—running after now Wilson, now Harding, now Baldwin, now Sir Allan Smith and the F.B.I., but never a working-class policy.

NOW this position means a very great danger for the Labour Party, not only immediately for the election, but in the issues approaching. It means that wherever there is a big hole or bog in capitalist politics at hand, the Labour Party is

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going to be the first to fall in. And there are some very big holes in front. One is an old familiar one: the question of coalition with the Liberal Party. The election is probably going to produce a very unstable parliamentary situation. Is the Labour Party proof against bourgeois coalition? Not only against open coalition, but against the more insidious forms of private understanding with a Liberal Government or abstention from opposition as in the 1910-14 Parliament? Recent utterances of MacDonald, the *New Statesman*, and others suggest the opposite. The membership of the Party will have to see to this by their vigilance, because Conference pledges count for little once the excitement of a Ministerial crisis begins.

THE second hole is a new one and more serious, and it may be most briefly described as Capitalist Reconstruction by Inflation. The signs are plentiful that powerful forces of Big Industry are pressing for a programme of capitalist reconstruction for British industry on modern lines as already largely carried through in France, Germany, and America. Such a tendency is foreshadowed in the speeches and statements of the National Liberals, of McCurdy, of Lloyd George, of the Federation of British Industries, of Sir Allan Smith, of McKenna, of Sir Eric Geddes. Such a programme would only be based on a policy of Inflation, however concealed. It would offer the bribe of absorbing the unemployed and higher wages. And it would mean in practice high profits for the big manufacturers, but for the workers rising prices and the path on which the German workers have been driven. Now every tendency in the Labour Movement plays into the hands of this. The Restoration of the Home Market is the ideal catchword. We have already seen the *Daily Herald* and the leaders of the Labour Party applauding enthusiastically the statements of Sir Allan Smith and McKenna. We have already seen the City Editor of *The Times* (in answer to a letter of Colonel Wedgwood asking for his approval of the Capital Levy as a measure of deflation) twitting the I.L.P. with its support of the Federation of British Industries programme of inflation. Not only does the reactionary Right Wing, represented by Hodges, come out with enthusiasm in support of Alliance with Capitalism and Higher Wages. The Left, represented by the

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Glasgow M.P.s, is also caught; because in so far as they have only spoken of restoration of the purchasing power of the working class, without putting forward a positive programme, their propaganda has only gone to serve the Big Business Campaign for Higher Wages. Thus the dangers in front are very real, until the working-class movement can develop a definite working-class policy.

IN this position what is to be done? It is no good looking to the existing leadership to produce a working-class programme: they are too far gone in confusion and capitulation already. The Election Programme of the Labour Party is a tired programme, assembling stale demands without rallying power or clear direction, and covering the whole with spiritual glue in place of Socialism. The fighting programme of the working class will have to come from the workers themselves. In this election now the situation will have to be taken as it is. The workers will have to fight, as they will fight, on the simplest instinctive working-class issues. All that can be done at present is to keep clear of all the intricacies of bourgeois politics, foreign policy, economic theory, restoration of markets, empire trade, tariffs, free trade, inflation, deflation, &c., &c., and concentrate on the plainest immediate issues. It is no good discussing rival theories for the cure of unemployment. What matters is that the two million unemployed are there now, that Protection is unable to meet the most elementary needs of the workers, and that it is the business of the State to take charge now of the production of the country (including its credit and trade) so as to employ the unemployed and supply the needs of the workers, and that if to do this means trenching on wealth and property, whether by capital levy or otherwise, we should do it without fear—and to get it done we should set up a Labour Government which shall be made to do it. That is the plain, direct agitation of the election.

BUT the question of a real working-class programme and a united programme still remains. Unless that is achieved the whole movement will break up. From where is that programme to come? The impulse towards it has got to come from the local bodies of the workers themselves. And that is the

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tremendous significance of the Trades Councils Conference which held its second annual meeting at Birmingham last month. For it is the Trades Councils Conference which will have to hammer out the common programme of the workers if any body is to do it. The tremendous response to the invitation to the conference, in spite of small publicity or possibility of organisation, revealed the latent feeling that is struggling to find expression. But that expression will not be found simply in resolutions on the machinery of trade union organisation. The chairman's address to the conference, which well deserves to rank as a real document of the movement, for the first time gave a lead that expressed the new spirit. His lead was applauded, but it was not yet followed. The conference was still too uncertain of itself, too overloaded in the agenda, to be ready for all that lies upon it. There are still the remains of the old outlook, existing in the Left no less than in the official movement and essentially similar in both, that thinks in terms of Trades Councils, of the General Council, of the Labour Party, of industries, and all the rest, but cannot think in terms of the working class and the elementary immediate issues that have to be faced to-day. But more and more rapidly on every side the understanding is developing that the supreme need is a definite agreed programme of concrete aims on which all the forces of the working class that mean to fight can concentrate on occasion, and once this is achieved then the way is open.

R. P. D.

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THE GENERAL ELECTION—WHY?

By J. T. WALTON NEWBOLD

THE General Election which is now upon us has been occasioned, as all such events are, not by the exigencies of the parliamentary situation or by any mere political antagonisms such as reveal themselves upon the surface of affairs, but as a reaction to deep-seated causes at work in the economic and social life of the modern world and, more especially, of Europe.

This political *dénouement* of an election became certain as an event of the near, of the very near, future from the time that it became evident that Mr. Baldwin's negotiations in Paris with M. Poincaré had not resulted in a manner satisfactory to those particular interests with which the Premier is connected. So certain was I myself of the early approach of a political crisis, of the character of the one which is now upon us, that I sent an urgent communication to my agent six weeks ago to prepare for an immediate General Election. The development of the position has been exceedingly rapid, but not more rapid than it was necessary for the Premier that it should be in order that he might maintain a position as favourable to himself as that which, by the hazard of economic circumstance, has, for the time being, developed.

The question of the Ruhr and its reaction upon the relations of Britain, France, and Germany has, during a quarter of a century, passed through a series of stages, one cycle of which produced the "First World War" and the second of which now seems exceedingly likely to bring about the "Second World War" at no very remote date.

Since the period, approximately, 1896-1898, when the French began to develop and the Germans to draw upon the prodigious iron-ore reserves of French Lorraine, the marriage of French ore and German coke has had a profoundly disturbing effect upon British capitalist politics. It was the expansion of the German steel industry consequent upon this and the resultant growing

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independence of the Ruhr of ore imports from British properties overseas that occasioned the Tariff Reform outburst of Joseph Chamberlain in 1903. His method was a tariff against German steel. He failed, but, when his method was rejected, the alternative method of fighting the German steel menace (which resulted from the growing productivity of Germany relying on French ore) became the ever-closer knitting together in *entente* and alliance of Britain and France and, in the end, war with Germany.

At the end of that war, Lloyd George wrote into the Treaty of Versailles an ingenious settlement, which, of course, was no settlement, whereby the French obtained even more iron-ore than hitherto, *i.e.*, by the recovery of Lorraine from Germany, the Germans retained the indispensable complementary of these ore-reserves, the coking coal of the Ruhr, while the British shipowners, whom economic development has made shipbuilders, steelmasters, and coke-oven operators, retained the ships in which to carry alternative Newfoundland iron-ore to Rotterdam *en route* to the Ruhr and alternative Durham coke to France *en route* to Lorraine.

For some three years this settlement attained its object: the economic divorce of French iron and German coke. About a year ago, however, France resolved to go into the Ruhr and to possess herself of the coke. The French and the German capitalists were upon the eve of arriving at a friendly arrangement when a gentleman, himself previously in business as a merchant in the Newfoundland iron-ore trade, the late Mr. Bonar Law, intervened in such a way as to strengthen Germany's negotiating will and power and to bring about a quarrel which had the effect of disorganising the Ruhr and at the same time embarrassing the steelmasters of Lorraine. As an immediate consequence came a revival in the British steel industry and an improvement in the trade prospects of Mr. Baldwin's own firm of Baldwins, Ltd.

When, however, the French pressure reduced the Ruhr capitalists to the very edge of submission (a submission made all the more attractive by reason of the threat of a social revolution in Germany from which, as from a worthless currency, they might escape by getting themselves into the borders of a State in actual association with France), the British Premier, this time Mr. Baldwin, endeavoured to arrive at a new understanding with M. Poincaré.

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This should have been the more easy having regard to the interests behind and around each of them. Mr. Baldwin was formerly a director of Lloyds Bank, Ltd., and is still the second largest shareholder in Baldwins, Ltd., coke-exporters and steelmasters, a firm which, with its associates, shares three directors with Lloyds Bank, Ltd. Also connected with Lloyds Bank, Ltd., is the Royal Dutch "Shell" oil combine. This latter is working in Paris with the Banque de l'Union Parisienne which, in its turn, heads the financial group behind M. Poincaré. Lloyds Bank, Ltd., has heavy commitments in France and is said to have been making liberal advances to Stinnes to buy coal and iron-ore.

Mr. Baldwin's plan, according to the usually well-informed paper, the *Outlook*, was to include a big loan to be advanced by the London banks to the French Government. Such a loan would have helped to stabilise the French franc, to strengthen the finances of the Poincaré Government, to keep France going with ready money until she receives something on account of reparations from the Ruhr, and would have been secured, no doubt, upon these very reparation payments, probably in the form of blocks of shares in the properties of the Ruhr. In such a way might Baldwins, Ltd., and Lloyds Bank, Ltd., have secured admission, together with Schneider, St. Chamond and Wendel, into the great corporation to exploit the Ruhr.

However, such a project would have raised higher the rate of interest on that ample credit which the industrialists cannot get, at terms that will suit them, from the bankers of London.

Just at this time, Mr. Lloyd George was touring on the grand scale through Canada and the United States, proclaiming the new evangel, preaching the crusade of Anglo-American co-operation to restore Europe to stability. Sir Eric Geddes, his old lieutenant, was denouncing the credit-restriction policy of Mr. Baldwin at home.

What was really happening in America was that Mr. Lloyd George, ever the "man Friday" of British industrialism, was searching for and succeeded in securing the aid of American-Canadian high finance, which was quite willing to come to the assistance of British industrialism writhing in the strangle-hold of Mr. Baldwin's banking friends.

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Mr. Lloyd George, bankrupted politically by the economic bankruptcy of the British industrialists, has come back from obscurity via Wall Street with the approbation of American finance. He came back in the expectation of forcing Mr. Baldwin to go to the country in the New Year. Mr. Baldwin has anticipated him by an immediate appeal to the country relying on the sentiment of the electorate to prevent a second appeal in Mr. Lloyd George's own time.

Mr. Baldwin wants a tariff "for purposes . . . of tariff negotiation." He has been very careful to stress that he wants a tariff for bargaining purposes. Thus far, also, he can carry Lord Derby. He cannot carry Lord Birkenhead, newly returned from a head-turning tour in America, nor can he carry Mr. McKenna.

Mr. Baldwin does not himself want a tariff except for the purpose of bargaining his way into M. Poincaré's Franco-Belgian Syndicate for the exploitation of the Ruhr.

Mr. Lloyd George, let us mark well this fact, has to accept the leadership of Mr. Asquith. Not only have we here an example of magnificent and justifiable caution on the part of a man who knows how humiliating may be the experience of a British Premier in these days of eclipse, but we have an evidence of the force behind the stubborn pride of the Right Hon. the member for Paisley —a cotton spinning purgatory—namely, the desperate *putsch* made by cotton and woollen and worsted capitalism to check Baldwin and at the same time not to deliver themselves over to Lloyd George.

Textile capitalism wants the "scrapping" of the Treaty of Versailles. Textile capitalism does not, however, desire to capitulate to American finance capital—especially does Lancashire desire independence of the American cotton growers' monopoly. In the same way, Lord Cowdray, the associate of the Royal Dutch "Shell" oil group, has every inducement to support his "man Friday," Mr. Asquith. Lord Cowdray does not want to have to yield ground at Vera Cruz and elsewhere in Mexico to the United States capitalists.

The British capitalists, the dominant section of the British capitalists, would, as an alternative to Mr. Baldwin, select not Mr. Lloyd George but Mr. Asquith.

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Then there is another aspect of the situation, but, except for the possibilities of German revolution, not so pressing as to explain an immediate General Election. That is the desire of the capitalists to blur the issue of the class conflict which, on the political stage, becomes more clearly marked every day. The workers will not accept another series of wage cuts with docility and there is danger—at least so the capitalists believe—of an increase in the political strength of the Labour Party. Not only so, but under an industrial pressure that would give greater influence to the left-wing elements in its ranks. Consequently, the capitalists desire to start a false scent and to commence a sham fight.

The Liberals have no policy or programme and, therefore, accept with the utmost enthusiasm a campaign in which they will be waging a war of negation against, on the one hand, the tariff and, on the other, the capital levy.

Moreover, both are agreed upon the desirability of distracting the attention of the advanced section of the Labour Party from the situation in Germany, and the dangers of counter-revolution and of a new war in Western Europe. The capitalists wish to relegate the Labour Party to the third position in the State so as to prevent it, now that it moves more towards the Left, choosing the topics of discussion and waging the political conflict over issues that are of any importance to the world's workers.

Finally, the capitalists know how depleted are the funds of the unions and the resources of individual socialists and labourists. They intend to eliminate the Labour Party, in a perfectly legal and constitutional manner, by the mere process of repeated elections which will exhaust the funds and so, automatically, cancel out the Labour Party.

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GERMANY IN THE THROES OF REVOLUTION

By J. B. ASKEW

WHAT the last few months of life in Germany have been like will be perhaps harder for anyone to describe who has passed through it than for one who has read of it, say, in the columns of a well-informed English newspaper.

Events have succeeded each other with such rapidity that hardly had the observer recovered his breath before a new blow or series of blows had knocked him once more out of time. I have never experienced an earthquake, but often enough during the past few months I imagine most people in Berlin must have had a similar sensation as if the very ground under their feet was giving way and the whole edifice of society crashing down.

Hardly was one crisis over than we were in the midst of another. No one knew what was coming next—the hope that was eternally arising that things had at least touched bottom was dashed almost before it was out of the mouth. How often has the mark been stabilised for a couple of days, just long enough to allow a few articles to be written heralding that Dr. Hilferding or some other genius had found the philosopher's stone or a magic wand for transforming worthless paper money into solid cash—and that without infringing on property rights—when the whole building thus elaborately set up crashed down like Humpty Dumpty. The mark had touched a new record in its downward course.

Dr. Hilferding, the pupil of my old master Kautsky, sums up the bankruptcy of Menshevist Marxism. Dr. Rudolph Hilferding wrote a very able book on financial capitalism before the war, but his practice since the war has been the exact contrary of the principles laid down in that book. More striking, however, was the fact that when the great expert on finance was called upon in August to save the desperate German financial situation, he put forward a programme, or, rather, said that he would apply the programme put forward by his predecessors ruthlessly; only, after a few weeks

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in office, to find himself put on the doormat before almost an attempt had been made to carry out that programme.

The day after this had occurred Rudolph Hilferding was announced as among the speakers at the Berlin Divisional Conference of the Social Democratic Party, and it was confidently expected that he would seize the occasion to explain what had caused his failure or who, if anybody, had crossed his intentions. Dr. Hilferding spoke, but on the one subject where he could have given useful information he was strangely silent, and up to now he has said, as far as I am aware, not a word on the point. The truth is in all probability that he knew perfectly well that the cause of his failure was that the measures which he had to take would have to be forced on the banks and the propertied classes and he had neither the strength nor the moral courage to say that. On the contrary, he did his best to damp down the fighting spirit of the workers by dwelling on the strength of the counter-revolutionary forces, insinuating that they had better be on their best behaviour or the German Mussolinis would teach them manners—advice which all experience in similar situations shows is the surest method of bringing on the very dangers against which it is an attempt to guard. To put it in other words—whatever line you take with a bully, don't show him that you are afraid of him. Above all must this advice be given to the workers, who only require to realise their own power to smash their opponents.

Rudolph Hilferding and Kautsky it was who, when capitalism was on its last legs as it would seem in 1918, when it had hopelessly broken down and Socialism was obviously the only way out, said : " No. We cannot socialise bankruptcy—let the capitalists clear up the mess and hand over the concern to us." The plan was very clever, but too clever by half. If capitalism had been really set up again does anyone in his senses think that we would then have the power to dispossess them ?

It is idle, however, to speculate. Capitalist reconstruction is a dead failure. After nearly five years' effort, after promise after promise has proved to be Dead Sea fruit, we are farther off than ever.

Soviet Russia—which was the bogey for German Social Democrats in 1919, which was always being held up as a terrible

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warning for all misguided enthusiasts who believed in revolutionary action, and which Fritz Adler and other pundits of the Austro-Marxist school assured us could not hold its own for a year—Soviet Russia is now making steady progress and is infinitely better off than the Germany which spurned her help in 1918.

The German Social Democrats were offered in 1918 the alliance of the Soviet Republic as well as Russian wheat. They refused both, relying on the Western democracy whom they feared to offend. The Western democracy replied by allowing every single promise, on the strength of which the Germans had laid down their arms, to be violated. German Menshevism preferred capitalist culture to Communist barbarism—and capitalist culture in the person of Poincaré has replied.

Germany is the classic land of Menshevism, where the boast of the Social Democrats was that by sticking to legality they had broken Bismarck's power. That no doubt is true. Bismarck could only have smashed the Social Democrats in 1890—when as is well known he proposed to declare the whole party as well as the parliamentary group outlaw—by smashing German industry. That, or something very like it, the German capitalists obviously were afraid of when the Kaiser decided to drop the pilot—and there can be little doubt that in so acting the Kaiser reflected the wishes of the German capitalist world, who were also opposed to Bismarck in the question of imperialist world politics, on which Bismarck always remained the statesman with a purely continental outlook.

The maintenance of the *status quo* against attacks from the reaction was the strong point of the old Social Democracy—it was to get breathing time for the movement to organise and develop in the respective countries. To a certain extent it may be said to have fulfilled its function, but to a far greater degree the contradiction between the revolutionary phrases and the timid policy pursued demoralised the entire movement, and when the final test came in 1914 Menshevism—or the Second International—broke down utterly.

In one of the letters, quoted by Mehring, written by Marx on the Turco-Russian war in 1878, he says that a great part of the responsibility for the Turkish defeat lay in the fact that they had neglected to get rid of the old Serail rulers who were the best

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defenders of the Tsar. A people that in such moments cannot make a clean revolutionary sweep is lost. That applies, it would seem to me, to Germany. Germany owed her defeat not least of all to the fact that they supported the military authorities till disaster had already overtaken them—and even then they did not abolish the old system, rather it was the old system that fell automatically to pieces and William who disappeared.

From that date instead of radical revolutionary changes, such as were obviously required in the system of administration, the old administrative system was practically maintained, but Social Democrats were placed in charge to do the dirty work of restoring order, so-called, till the reactionaries were once more powerful enough to kick them out.

That, all the same, in many respects great and revolutionary changes have been made in Germany it would be idle to deny. The Workers' Councils, the Eight Hours Law, the Tenants' Councils in the houses, to mention only a few, are great achievements of the revolution which it is the aim of the reactionaries to get undone. The workers have a tremendous power in Germany and they know it.

For that reason I am not inclined to think that we shall see a direct Fascist dictatorship in Germany now except in so far as it has already been achieved by the present Government by a side wind. The reactionaries know very well that even to-day they cannot rule against the Labour Movement as a whole—above all, all their bullets and poison gases will not enable them to feed a single man, woman, or child—and, as Radek pointed out some time ago, the problem of government in Germany is who can enable the people to get bread.

Despite the many failures and disastrous incidents that have occurred, the united front of the workers in Germany is on the way. It is for the British and other comrades to see that they are allowed fair play; above all, to absolutely prohibit the transformation of Germany into a colony or protectorate of any Power as Egypt was transformed in the 'eighties by the joint efforts, be it remembered, of England and France, who afterwards nearly came to blows in the matter. *Absit omen.*

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THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION IN EUROPE

By G. A. HUTT

WITH the collapse of capitalist economy after the imperialist war, it seemed that the forces of the working-class revolution would sweep Europe. But the working class as a whole was unready and imperialism had bitten too deeply into the ideological fabric of the old Labour and Social Democratic Parties. They sabotaged the struggle for power, and turned to coalition with the bourgeoisie in order to achieve " reconstruction " —of capitalism.

The White Terror triumphed early in Finland and Hungary. In Germany the Social Democrats took the lead in the suppression of the revolting workers. Fascism has risen to power in Italy, in Bulgaria, in Spain. The Fascist National Democrats are now the most influential political group in Poland and dominate the Government. In Austria the forces of reactionary clericalism are in power. The rising workers' revolution in Germany has led to a close military alliance between the Poincaré Government and Czecho-Slovakia.

As the struggle between revolution and counter-revolution in Germany reaches its moment of extremest tension the counter-revolution in Europe has either won, or is in process of winning, all the strategic positions surrounding Germany. German Fascism, centred in Bavaria, is in relations with its brethren in Austria, in Poland, in Hungary. French, British, and American imperialisms are in varying degrees lending their moral and financial support to the growing counter-revolution throughout Europe.

The progress and fortunes of the proletarian revolution in Europe are relatively well known. But the other side of the barricade is shrouded in darkness and not a little mystery. However, it is possible to construct, from occasional hints and references in the bourgeois Press, something of a picture of the actual state of the European counter-revolution to-day. This article will attempt

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briefly the task of constructing this picture, of drawing together, from the tangled web of revolution and counter-revolution in Europe to-day, the threads of counter-revolution.

In the first place there is the question of the associations between the Bavarian reactionaries and their political confrères in Austria, Hungary, and Poland. The *Manchester Guardian* published at the end of October certain details of secret negotiations between Bavarian and Polish reactionaries. These negotiations were directed to securing Polish support for Bavarian separatism. In return for this support, Poland would receive East Prussia. The scheme thus broached received, from its association with agrarian reaction, the name of the "Great Green Plan." Its inspiration, too, was largely clerical: and it is therefore not surprising that the "Christian Socialist" (*i.e.*, reactionary clerical) Government of Austria has also become involved. In fact, a union between reactionary Austria and reactionary Bavaria—seceding from the German Reich—has now become an integral part of the scheme.

It is interesting to note that one of the chief Polish promoters of the "Great Green Plan" appears to be none other than the notorious Monsignor Cieplak (though this is not finally certain), over whose "persecution" some time ago by the Soviet Government certain leaders of the British Labour Party waxed indignant. The *Manchester Guardian* further reports that the scheme is receiving financial assistance from influential American sources: while it is evident that such a scheme would win the active countenance and support of French reaction.

There has been close contact all through between the Bavarian Fascists under Hitler and the Austrian "Haken Kreuzler," and also between Hitler's forces and the Hungarian Nationalists under Gömbös. The intimate nature of the Hitler-Gömbös alliance received spectacular illustration a few days ago in the proposed Hungarian Fascist *coup d'état*, which was to be undertaken at the end of November with Bavarian aid. A secret military agreement, signed by plenipotentiaries on behalf of the Bavarian and Hungarian Fascist organisations, has been discovered. The aim of the alliance is clear. As the Balkans correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* wrote:—

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> The Gömbös Government, which was to have been set up with Bavarian help, would have joined Bavarian reaction to defeat "Marxism" in Central Europe.

In Poland, the move to the Right in the last few months has been notable. It has evoked comment from *The Times*, which observed recently:—

> This swing to the Right has been very self-conscious. It was made to the accompaniment of loud applause from the rank and file and the Government Press, which interpreted it as part of a great wave of reaction against Socialism which was sweeping over Europe.

Czecho-Slovakia, too, has its Fascists. Under the leadership of Dr. Kramarcz they were already reported as strong enough to be planning for a *coup d'état* in July last. Kramarcz, in the words of the *Daily Herald:*—

> claims to have the support of 85 per cent. of the officers of the army, of a majority of the State officials, of the big Zivnostenska Bank, of the landowners, of a great part of the "Sokols" (the athletic clubs, which have played such a big part in Czech politics).

It was further reported that Kramarcz was very hopeful of British support—including financial support. The reason for this is clear. The Czecho-Slovakian Fascists are anti-French, and therefore useful pawns for the British imperialist bourgeoisie in its struggle with French imperialism.

At present Czecho-Slovakia is making the best of both worlds by signing treaties with both Powers. With a large army and a budget deficit, Czecho-Slovakia has just signed a military and political treaty of alliance with France. The outward and formal sign of the alliance was the visit of President Masaryk, full of years and learning, to Paris. Significantly enough, the Paris Press compared his visit with that of the Tsar Nicholas II years ago. The political calibre of Dr. Masaryk may be best judged from his oracular remark:—

> Now that Germany is surrendering unconditionally to France . . . the course of European reconstruction has advanced a further step.

This military alliance, as *The Times* points out, is quite incompatible with the hitherto pacific policy of Czecho-Slovakia. It is, in short, more than a defensive alliance. Against whom, then, is it directed? The answer is supplied in a report from the Prague correspondent of the *Daily Herald*. After pointing out that the officially proclaimed

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policy of Czecho-Slovakia towards civil war in Germany is one of complete neutrality—except that Czecho-Slovakia would take the necessary steps to " protect her frontier "—he says:—

> I gain a definite impression that Czecho-Slovakia would not abide by such a passive policy were France to demand the active intervention of Prague. It would not be the first occasion on which " incidents on the frontier " have been artificially evoked with a view to justifying interference. Czecho-Slovakia's intervention would be far more probable in case of a proletarian dictatorship in Germany than in the event of a dictatorship of the Right.

The counter-revolutionary ring is completed by Finland, since 1918 a classic country of the White Terror. To Finland may now be added Sweden, where lately Hederstierna, Foreign Minister in the Conservative Government, openly advocated a military alliance of the two countries. This alliance was to be frankly counter-revolutionary, in that it was directed against Russia.

On the outskirts of the counter-revolution come Fascist Bulgaria, Rumania, where Fascism is increasing in strength, and Yugo-Slavia, where fierce repression of all working-class activity has long been the order of the day.

So far as the relation of Entente imperialism to the European counter-revolution is concerned, the outstanding rôle of French imperialism has long been a matter of common knowledge. Poland and the Little Entente—Czecho-Slovakia, Yugo-Slavia, and Rumania—are notoriously French protégés. In the course of the present year credits to the tune of some 800 million francs have been granted by France to Poland, Rumania, and Yugo-Slavia. *The Times* says:—

> It is understood that these credits have not taken the form of cash payments, but that they are being used for the purchase of war material belonging to the French Government or manufactured in France.

Reports are now current that the new French budget will contain an item of one and a-half milliard francs, for a loan to the Little Entente. Other large sums are mentioned as intended for Austria and Hungary. The Paris correspondent of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote:—

> The loan to Hungary will enable that country to improve and enlarge the mammoth Skoda ammunition works . . . making the plant bigger than Krupps during the war.

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He points out that Schneider-Creusot secured control of Skoda after the war, and continues:—

> Consummation of the scheme will give France control over all the munitions industries among its little allies.

The recent Franco-Polish oil convention, with its "extravagant privileges" for French capitalists, has been one further illustration of the dominating power possessed by French imperialism in Eastern and Central Europe.

However, it is totally false to omit any consideration of the relations of British or American imperialism with European reaction, as liberal and pacifist writers on foreign affairs in this country are so accustomed to do.

British imperialism was mainly responsible, acting through the League of Nations, for the capitalist "reconstruction" of Austria, which has proved such an enormous boon for the Austrian reactionaries. It is also angling for the lead in a similar "reconstruction" of White Hungary. It has floated loans to Czecho-Slovakia. It is credited with a far from unimportant part in the Bulgarian Fascist coup. It has, as pointed out earlier in this article, relations with Czecho-Slovakian Fascism. Vickers control the Rsista armament works in Rumania. Great interest has lately been manifested in Poland, not only by financial experts like Mr. Hilton Young, but by certain big industrialists of the calibre of Mr. W. L. Hichens, of Cammell Laird.

Finally, that certain forces in American imperialism have their fingers in the pie of European counter-revolution may be seen from the recent Finnish loan, which was eagerly taken up by Wall Street. It should not be forgotten, either, that Hitler is commonly reputed to receive considerable financial assistance from American sources.

This, then, is the picture. Throughout Europe the counter-revolution is either the wielder of State power or has a large and increasing voice in the control of that power. Further, through its associations with the great imperialist groups, the counter-revolution in Europe appears as part of a world-historical process, the process of capitalist decline. As night falls on capitalism, the gathering forces of the world revolution are faced by the world counter-revolution.

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AMERICAN LABOUR'S CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

By Wm. F. DUNNE

(*Wm. F. Dunne, one of the leaders of left-wing trade unionism in America, was expelled at the Portland Convention of the American Federation of Labour. This ominous sign of the repetition of continental tactics of expulsion and division, already practised with ruinous results by the right wing in France, Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, and other countries, and attempted unsuccessfully by the British Labour Party Executive against the Communists, is a revelation of the growing crisis within the American Movement.*)

IF the convention of the American Federation of Labour was a working-class gathering the result of its deliberations at Portland could arouse nothing but black despair on the part of the left-wing elements in the American Labour Movement. It was not a convention of workers, however, but a gathering of professional Labour leaders whose interest in the Labour Movement is exactly the same as the heads of any other well-paying business.

For weeks before the convention it was evident that the red menace of Communism was to be made the issue at the Portland meet. The series of articles sponsored by the officials of the United Mine Workers containing an invitation to the employers to join hands with the Labour leaders in stamping out radicalism sounded the key-note of the convention and outlined the policy of the Gompers machine.

The Portland Convention spent its time in hunting heretics and in unseating the writer, who acknowledged without equivocation his disbelief in the divine character of the officialdom of the American Labour Movement. This proceeding took up almost a whole day of the convention and was the feature of its sessions.

It was no spontaneous outburst of indignation on the part of the delegates, but a carefully prepared climax to an official scheme, which had for its object the defeat of all resolutions dealing with

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amalgamation, a Labour Party, and the recognition of Soviet Russia. I was unseated on the second Monday of the convention, but as early as the preceding Tuesday the reporters of the capitalist Press had been told by the A.F. of L. publicity agents that I would be unseated ; the information was not given, however, to the correspondent of the Federated Press.

Two days before the proceedings against me were started John J. O'Leary, personal Press agent for Gompers and " Labour expert " of the *New York Herald*, in a special article in the *Portland Oregonian* predicted my unseating.

Never at any convention of the Federation has there been such close co-operation between the capitalist Press and the officialdom of the A.F. of L. Unlimited space was at the disposal of the reactionaries, and in not a single instance did a word of criticism of A.F. of L. officials or policies creep into the four employer-owned Portland sheets. The convention responded to this, and from beginning to end everything of a working-class character was carefully eliminated from the proceedings. So strong was this complex that two working men, who were one day watching Gompers get into his limousine after adjournment, were seized, searched, and manhandled by the police lieutenant in plain clothes who drove his car ; they were suspicious characters, you understand, because they did not fit into the picture.

There can be no doubt that the machine was frightened at the resolutions for amalgamation, the Labour Party, and recognition of Russia that cropped up from unexpected places. The convention of the Moulders' Union, whose president, Joseph Valentine, is a member of the Executive Council of the A.F. of L., had endorsed the Labour Party and Russian recognition just as the A.F. of L. went into session. Something like thirteen big international unions had expressed themselves in favour of one or all of the three propositions at conventions, to say nothing of the State federations and city central bodies who had taken similar action. The situation was full of dynamite for an officialdom which is trying to prove that it loves the wage-system more ardently than the employers themselves.

The high-salaried business men who speak for Labour did not give one moment's consideration to the idea that fighting against

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progress is the job of the employers. They hold the same views as do the capitalists who employ the dues-paying workers in the unions, and acted accordingly as one knew they would do. Employers are more inclined to deal with organisations that have the viewpoint of the masters, so every effort was made to convince the employers that Labour hates anyone who advances the idea that the present system is not all it should be and that Labour organisations can never achieve power by catering to the employers' love of the capitalist system.

This was the strategy of the convention—to outdo chambers of commerce, commercial clubs, advertising associations, Rotary and Kiwanis clubs, and the Bar Association in denunciation of anything that could be interpreted as un-American, and into this category were placed recognition of Soviet Russia, amalgamation, and the Labour Party.

To attain this objective the full strength of the Gompers machine was mobilised. The first days of the session were taken up with religious and patriotic speeches in which the radicals were flayed. Frank Hodges, whose name will be mentioned with a curse by the British workers for many a long day to come in connection with Black Friday, warned the convention against the " borers from within " ; Mayor Baker, elected by the Klan, and various ministers and relief workers, all sounded the same note ; the local Press played up every such denunciation, and the not too courageous delegates were duly impressed.

Thus the stage was all set by Monday, October 8. In the report of the educational committee, the Federated Press was scored as an agency for the dissemination of Communist propaganda. Matthew Woll, heir apparent to the throne, speaking for the committee recommendation, urged the convention to unseat me. Bill Green, Secretary of the United Mine Workers, was recognised and opened the case for the prosecution without any motion being made, the report of the educational committee on the Federated Press being forgotten in the excitement. The evidence of the inquisitors consisted of articles, headlines, and editorials in one issue of the *Butte Bulletin* in which the charges of bribery made by Lewis and Farrington against each other were published. In an editorial I had referred to Lewis in connection with his Herrin

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publicity as trying " to turn members of his union over to the hangman after they had been acquitted by a jury," and while these excerpts were being read I heard more than one grunt of approval from the delegates in my vicinity, nor were there any expressions of disapproval or anger such as the reactionaries expected ; on the contrary, the convention was extremely silent and attentive.

Green ended his indictment by stating that a precedent for the proceedings could be found in the Scriptures as Lucifer had been expelled from heaven. I could not keep from laughing as I thought of the tremendous wing-surface that would be required for some of these Poland-China-swine-built Labour leaders to play the part of angels. Green also read letters seized by the Department of Justice raid on the office of Fred Merrick in Pittsburgh which showed that I was in that district during the 1922 strike of the coal miners. Phillip Murray, Vice-president of the U.M.W.A., made the motion for my expulsion after Green had finished his exhortation, and it was only then that it was remembered that the report of the educational committee had not yet been put before the convention. That matter was hurriedly disposed of and real business resumed.

Murray denounced me as a Communist and a bitter opponent of the officialdom of the United Mine Workers and of the A.F. of L. Green had read extracts from a speech I made at an open meeting the night before, in which I referred to the officialdom as " fat boys," and had stated that " I did not know it would be necessary to throw anyone out to prove their respectability," and, further, " that these people were more conservative than the employers." These statements were supposed to prove that I was not a good trade unionist and should be cast into outer darkness.

I secured the floor and spoke for about forty minutes. I think in justice to myself it is fair to say that never before at an A.F. of L. Convention have the bureaucrats of the Labour Movement heard the truth about themselves worded in so clear a manner. I mentioned the fact that Labour is only about one-seventh organised in the United States, " and yet," I said, " you strut around as though you had capitalism by the throat." I told them that I had heard much boasting of the revocation of charters, but nothing about

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the spread of organisation. I told them that the Scriptural precedent discovered by Green " gave the proceedings a religious atmosphere that was quite in keeping with the heresy-hunting proclivities of the A.F. of L. officials." I mentioned the fear for their good jobs that was expressed in their hostility to amalgamation and the Labour Party, and told them that I did not consider them workers ; that they were as far removed from the struggles of the rank and file as were the employers they sought to placate. I told them that it was not the first time I had faced a white-collared mob bent upon my destruction and that I had no intention of defending anything I had said or done ; in a capitalist court I would defend myself, but not before the lackeys of the capitalist class ; any statement I might make would be for the purpose of making my position clear and not to apologise for it.

Adjournment was had before the discussion was finished, and upon convening in the afternoon there occurred what was, to me, the most pitiful spectacle of the whole convention. Fred Mooney, of West Virginia, one of the U.M.W.A. delegates, was forced by the Lewis machine to support Murray's motion and attack me. He was placed in the position of doing the bidding of the machine or of being deprived of all financial assistance in his coming trial, arising out of the march of the miners three years ago. He based his attack upon my speech and said that, only for that, he would have opposed the motion; he stated that I was being " framed " in Michigan just as he was in West Virginia, but that I had no place in the convention because of my beliefs ; he became hysterical and incoherent many times during his speech, his voice rising to a scream in which no words could be discerned. I felt genuinely sorry for him, but he is only another fighter in the ranks of Labour who has been ruined to serve the ambitions of cowardly and dishonest officialdom.

Tracy, of the Brick and Clay Workers, took umbrage at my blue shirt, and used most of his time in denouncing Foster. Greenstein, of the Jewellery Workers, resurrected the exploded canard about my alleged Ku Klux Klan affiliation, but I was given no opportunity to reply. I trust that Greenstein has been repaid for his services and is now in good standing with the Gompers machine after having been out of the A.F. of L. for two years.

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The vote was overwhelmingly in favour of unseating me, but it was not unanimous although every effort was made to have it so. The few who braved the machine will undoubtedly suffer for their temerity. Among them were Sillinsky and Soderberg of the Tailors' International, Ed. Launer of the Paper and Sulphite Workers, Ohls of the Wisconsin Federation of Labor, Burns of the Tacoma Central Labor Council, Duncan of Seattle, and Stevens of Minneapolis.

Following my unseating, the work of railroading amalgamation, the Labour Party, and recognition of Soviet Russia began. The amalgamation resolutions were lumped together, the report of the committee denounced them as communistic, no discussion was permitted, and no roll-call obtained.

The Labour Party resolutions met almost the same fate, although a number of delegates supported them ; they too were denounced as un-American and against the interests of the Labour movement, but a roll-call was secured nevertheless, and a surprising sentiment in their behalf was disclosed in spite of the intimidation of the machine. One vote out of every thirteen was cast for the Labour Party.

Recognition of Russia also commanded support that surprised the administration after the anti-red offensive was supposed to have terrorised every delegate. Gompers and Woll were the only ones who took the floor against the resolution. Hays of the Typographical, Healy of the Stationary Engineers, Smart of the Switchmen, and Johnston of the Machinists all spoke for it.

It can be safely said, I think, that the offensive against the left wing reached its height in Portland. Another period of industrial depression is just around the corner and the A.F. of L. now has less than 3,000,000 members ; the militants have brought their programme on the convention floor and it was necessary to expel one of them to prevent the machine being challenged on all fronts. Nothing was done that could possibly strengthen Labour, except perhaps to endorse the Workers' Educational Bureau and that is now safely under the patronage of the bureaucracy. Trying times are ahead of American Labour and in throttling proposals advocated by the militants the A.F. of L. dynasty has done the one thing necessary to convince the intelligent trade unionists that the only

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hope for American Labour lies in the programme of the Trade Union Educational League and in the rallying of the rank and file of the unions around that programme for a merciless fight against any and all officials who oppose it.

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THE CRITICISM OF PROLETARIAN ART

By A. BOGDANOV

ALL creative work, whether it is the creative work of Nature or of man, elemental or systematic, leads to organised, harmonised, enduring forms only by way of *regulation*. These are two closely combined and mutually indispensable sides of every organisational process. Thus, in the elemental development of life, the creative quality is "mutability," it is this that is constantly creating new combinations, new departures from the earlier forms; these are then regulated by " natural selection," which eliminates from their number all those that are not adapted to the environment, while it preserves and strengthens those that are well adapted. In production the creative quality is labour, for ever changing the combinations of things; the regulator is systematic control by the consciousness which, constantly watching the results of the effort, stops it when the direct aim has been achieved, or changes its direction when it departs from this aim.

In the work of the artist we have the same relations: new combinations of living images are always being created, and at the same time they are regulated by conscious, systematic selection, by the mechanism of " self-criticism," which eliminates all that is not harmonious and does not correspond to the task, and preserves all that is suitable. When self-criticism is insufficient, the result is contradiction, incoherence, an accumulation of images without art.

The development of art on a social scale is regulated by the whole social environment, which accepts or rejects the works introduced into it and supports or kills new currents in the arts. But there is also a systematic regulation, which is accomplished by *criticism*. Its real basis is of course also the social environment: the work of criticism is done from the standpoint of a certain collective —in a class society, from the standpoint of one class or the other.

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We shall now examine the way, the directions, in which the proletarian criticism can and should regulate the development of proletarian art.

The first thing we have to do is to establish the limitations of proletarian art, to define clearly its scope, so that it shall not dissolve in the surrounding cultural environment or mix up with the art of the old world. This is not so simple a task as it might seem at first; so far, blunders have always been made and confusion caused in this respect.

In the first place, there is seldom a distinction made between proletarian art and peasant art. No doubt the working class, especially our Russian proletariat, has come from the peasantry, and there are many points of contact between these two classes. The peasantry, in its mass, is also a toiling and also an exploited element of society; it is owing to this that a prolonged political union can be created between the workers and peasants. But in co-operation and in ideology, in the fundamental methods of thought and action, there are deep distinctions between them *on points of principle*. The soul of the proletariat, its organisational basis, is collectivism, fellowship, co-operation; it becomes conscious of itself as a class in the degree that this basis develops in its life and penetrates it. Peasants and small freeholders are mostly inclined toward individualism, toward the spirit of personal interest and private ownership; they are "petty bourgeois"—an incorrect and mechanical name, because "bourgeois" really means an inhabitant of the city, but expressing correctly the real character of the vital strivings of the peasantry. Besides, the patriarchal order of the family household preserves among the peasants the spirit of authority and religion; the inevitable narrowness of horizon characteristic of the village and the dependence of backward agriculture on elemental forces (which to the peasant are mysterious) all tend to produce the same result.

Examine the whole of peasant poetry, not only the pre-revolutionary, but even the most modern, that of the Left Social-Revolutionaries: even the "Red Sound" and the "Almanach," by the talented poets Kluyev, Essenin, and others. Here you meet everywhere with the fetish of "our earth," and of the bases of "*our own household*"; here also is the whole Olympus

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of the peasant gods — the Trinity, the Virgin Mary, George the Brave, and Nicholas the Benefactor; then note their constant gravitation towards the past, the honouring of leaders of the unorganised, elemental forces of the people, such as Stenka Rasin (the bandit hero). All this is quite alien to the consciousness of the socialist proletariat.

And yet such works are printed in workers' papers and magazines as proletarian, and are considered by critics also as such. It is true that many of the proletarian poets started out with peasant poetry—either because they recently had come from the village and still preserved their connection with it, or simply by way of imitation. The first periodicals of the workers' poets, *Our Songs*, which were published in Moscow in 1913 and then destroyed by the Tsarist censors, are full of purely peasant poems. A great part of the poetry is also of a transitional type.

Another source of confusion was the influence of the soldiers, to which the proletariat submitted in some degree during the years of war and revolution. For the most part, the soldiers are these same peasants, torn away from production and living in masses in conditions of communism in consumption, and trained for the business of destruction or largely engaged in that business. The struggle for peace, the hostility towards the rich, a hostility less conscious and less abstract than that of the proletariat, brought the soldiers temporarily into political alliance with the proletariat and caused a close communion between the two, although as social types they are not related to each other and are even opposed to each other by their rôle in life. The fellowship in the fight caused the ideology of the soldiers to find its way into some workers' papers and taint the mind of some of the more facile proletarian poets. Hence it happened that the fighting songs of the revolution were sometimes tinged by specifically soldiers' ideas, and thus the nobility of tone, which is obligatory and natural to a class bearing higher ideals, was impaired. In these verses the spirit of narrow personal hatred toward individual representatives of the bourgeoisie was introduced, a spirit which may have some justification in life, but is inadmissible in poetry because it degrades the ideal of the struggle of a great class. And even excesses were admitted, such as malignant jeerings over the beaten enemies, praise of lynching,

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and sadistic exultations—we are sorry to say there were even instances of these. Of course these things have nothing to do with the ideology of the proletariat. For the ideology of the proletariat contains characteristic fighting motives, but not vulgar soldiers' motives; a firm hostility towards capital as a social force, but not a petty maliciousness towards individual representatives of that class, who are the inevitable product of their social environment. Of course the proletariat must resort to arms when this is demanded by the interests of its liberty, its development, its ideal; but it fights against that social primitiveness which is the cause of all armed struggle. The brutality which this struggle breeds in the human soul may for some time master the mind of the fighters, but it is strange and hostile to the proletarian culture, which admits severity only of necessity. The spirit of real power is nobility, and the labouring collectivity is a real power. It is destined to become the new aristocracy of culture—the last in the history of mankind, the first that really merits such a name.

Another line of separation should be drawn by our criticism between proletarian art and intellectual socialism. Here the confusion is very natural, because of the closeness of the ideals. But still there are deep and important divergences. The toiling intellectuals have come from the bourgeois culture; on that culture and for it they have worked, and on it they have been brought up. Their principle is individualism. And the very character of intellectual work is apt to maintain this tendency: in the work of the scholar, the artist, or author co-operation is not felt directly, the rôle of the community is not manifest, there is more external distinctness, an illusion of perfectly independent personal activity. And when co-operation is evident, then the intellectual occupies the authoritarian position of leader and organiser—as an engineer at the factory, a physician in a hospital, &c. Hence comes the element of authority which is inevitably preserved in the bourgeois world and its culture, as an organisational supplement to their anarchical basis of life.

Owing to all this it so happens for the most part that even when the toiling intellectual rises to a deep and sincere sympathy with the working class, to faith in the Socialist ideal, the past still preserves its influence on the manner of his thought, on his

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perception of life, on his conception of the forces and the paths of its development.

An instance of this is Verhaeren's drama *The Dawn*, which is the first play mentioned whenever the question of plays for a Proletarian Theatre is raised, and is considered as meriting production in such a theatre, without any comments, as entirely "belonging" to us. This is a mistake. The play is excellent, and it is a valuable inheritance for us, but still it is an inheritance from the old world. In it the spirit of Socialism is clothed in an authoritarian individualistic shell, which must be understood but cannot be accepted at face-value. The whole piece is constructed around the heroic personality of the people's tribune, who leads the masses. This personality is the soul of the strife and victory; without him the masses are ignorant and blind, unable to find their own way. It is on the tragedy of this character that the author centres the interest of his drama. This is the way the old world looks upon the significance of personality. Collectivism has another way of constructing life and explaining it. Of course the community recognises heroes, it may even create a hero—but as a personification of the forces of the *collectivity*, as an expression of its collective will, an apostle of its ideals.

And as long as there is a different attitude towards heroes, this is only a proof that the collectivity has not yet matured to a clear conception of itself.

The great Belgian sculptor, Constantine Meunier, in his statues depicting the life of the workers, made an actual cult of Labour. But notwithstanding the deep love of the artist towards the things he depicts, notwithstanding all his sympathetic understanding—still it is not the cult of the *Collectivity*. His merit is great, despite this; but the proletarian artist should know that Meunier's work is not a perfect model for him: his tasks lie further on.

The artistic self-consciousness of the working class must be pure and clear, free from every foreign element. This is the first task of our criticism.

Our criticism of proletarian art should be directed in the first place to its content.

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In the nascent culture of a class that is young and living under difficult conditions, a certain *narrowness* of content is quite natural, as a result of the lack of experience and the inevitable limitations in the field of observation. Thus fiction, at the beginning, takes its themes and material from the life of the workers themselves and the revolutionary intellectuals who are connected with them; only little by little, and so far to a very small degree, does it widen its field. Yet there can be no doubt but that proletarian art must enclose in the field of its experience the whole of society and Nature, the whole life of the universe.

What can be done by our criticism in this regard? Of course it is not in a position to give the nascent art what it wants. But it can and it should put before it constantly the problem of widening its field; it can and should note every success attained in this direction, and point out the new possibilities connected with this success. And, indirectly, it may render real assistance in the making of such successes by comparing, wherever opportunity offers, the works of proletarian art with the works of the old art which are similar in their "artistic idea," *i.e.*, in the organisational problem they try to solve. It will then be found that in the old art both the material and the point of view, and sometimes even the very principle of solution, are quite different.

Especially this will be found in relation to the favourite problems of classical literature—the organisation of the family, the struggle between "lower" and "higher" motives in the human soul, the passions which master men, the education of character, &c.

Some of these and similar problems have already been put and solved in one way or another by science or philosophy. Our criticism should point out and compare these solutions with the artistic solutions of the same problems: the great collectivism of the universal experience of man, which is stored beneath the shell of the scientific world, will in many cases prove a precious guide for young, searching, and hesitating creative effort.

The narrowness of artistic content may consist not only in the limited field of organised experience, but also in narrow one-sided perception, in the limited nature of the primary attitude towards the material of experience. The most typical case is an excessive concentration on the social struggle, the limitation of art to an

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organising and fighting rôle. This is very natural for a youthful and fighting class, fighting moreover under the most difficult conditions. It is even a necessary phase, during the first stages of development of this class, while it is still discovering itself through its consciousness of opposition to another class in society and is working out the fighting aspect of its ideology. But afterwards this point of view inevitably becomes insufficient.

The working class advances towards its ideal through struggle, yet its ideal is not one of destruction, but of a new organisation of life. This organisation is, moreover, to be *all* new, immeasurably complex, and harmonious. Consequently the cult of the fighting consciousness in itself does not give us a solution of our main problem. It is necessary to work out an ideology of Socialist construction. This course has already been taken here in Russia by proletarian science, and proletarian art must develop in the same direction. It will do so faster, and with greater energy, as the working class comes nearer to the accomplishment of its ideal.

In our present-day proletarian poetry the agitational content predominates—thousands of poems calling to the class struggle and glorifying the victories in that struggle, hundreds of short stories exposing capital and its servants. This must be changed. The part should not be mistaken for the whole. To give oneself up to a universal study of life is of course much more difficult than to join in an attack on the hostile lines; but for Socialism it is more necessary, because only a universal understanding of life in all its concrete forces and forms will furnish the necessary support for all-embracing creative effort.

The narrowing down of poetry to social agitational themes has an unfavourable effect even on its artistic side, which is essentially its organising force. It becomes stereotyped, and it dulls the sympathetic perception which fuses the masses with the poet.

Then, even when the content unfolds further, it is still frequently viewed from this same angle as narrower than it really is. Thus in a book by A. Gastev, which has been recently published, the chief theme is machine production—its gigantic organising force, the way in which it unites the labouring collectivity, and the might and power over the elements which it gives to that collectivity.

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This is one of the primary ideas of the *cultural-creative* proletarian consciousness; yet Gastev named his book the *Poetry of the Workers' Blow*, as though his task had not crossed the limits of the *fighting* consciousness of the proletariat. For it is evident that the words "Workers' Blow" (especially in an atmosphere of a stormy revolution) will be associated with the idea of the social struggle, but not with the idea of a blow by, let us say, a blacksmith's hammer. And even this is quite an insufficient symbol of machine technique.

The agitational narrowing down of artistic ideas is manifested also in the fact that the capitalists and bourgeois intellectuals are represented as though they are *personally* bad, cruel, dishonest people. Such a conception is naive and contradictory to the collective method of thinking. It is not a question of personal qualities at all, as between one bourgeois or another; it is not against individuals that revolutionary feeling and revolutionary effort should be directed. It is a question of the position of classes, and the struggle is waged against a social system, against the collectivities which are connected with that system and defend it. The capitalist may personally be even a very noble man; but in so far as he is a representative of his class his actions and thoughts will necessarily be determined by his social position. Even at the moment of battle he should be regarded by the conscious proletarian, not as a personal enemy, but as a blind link in the chain forged by history. In order to gain the victory over the old world it is more useful to understand it in its better representatives and its sublimer revelations than to imagine that there are only bad people and vicious motives in it. The collective thought and will of the working class should not be exchanged for pettiness.

In close relation with the agitational narrowing down of creative work is another theory, recently brought forward, according to which proletarian art must infallibly be "buoyant" and exulted. We are sorry to state that this theory is quite a favourite, especially with the younger and less experienced proletarian poets, although it is merely childish. The scale of collective class feeling could not and should not be so limited. No doubt it is natural for a labouring collectivity to have a lively and vivid sense of its power. But it should not be forgotten that this force is also liable to defeats.

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Art must, first of all and always, be perfectly sincere and true, for the very reason that it is an organising factor of life—how can untrustworthy art, untrusted, organise anything ?

It is true that despair is not worthy of fighters; but the deception of rosy glasses is still less worthy of them; it is a flight from reality, a deceiving mask for that very same despair. This theory would degrade poetry to the level of that which put for its slogan:—

Elevating deception is dearer to us,
than the mass of common truths.

No, not sweet glorification, but unshattered will and historic pride—these are the things necessary for the proletariat surrounded as it is by enemies on all sides :—

Si fractus illabatur orbis
Impavidum ferient ruinæ. [1]

The ancient poets, individualists, knew what real courage is; all the more should it be known to the poet of the new community.

In its whole regulating work our criticism of proletarian art should constantly have this thing in view: *the spirit of Labour collectivism is in the first place objectivity.*

The criticism of proletarian art from the standpoint of its form should pursue one perfectly definite and clear object: harmony between form and content.

Of course the proletariat must learn artistic technique from its predecessors in the first place. Here necessarily the temptation rises to take as a model the very latest that has been worked out by the old art. And here it is easy to make blunders.

In art, form is inseparably connected with content, and this is the very reason why the latest is not always the most perfect. When a social class has accomplished its progressive rôle in the historical process and is going toward decadence the content of its art inevitably also becomes decadent; and after the content follows the form, which is made to suit it. The decadence of a social class takes place as it passes towards parasitism. In the wake of this follows satiety, the sense of life becomes dull. Life is deprived of the main source of new, developing content for art—social creative activity. Life becomes empty, it loses its " rationale," *i.e.*, its social sense.

[1] Though the earth fall asunder he'll not know
Fear of its ruin.

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In order to fill up this emptiness the members of the dying class search for new enjoyments and for novel sensations. Art organises these searchings: on the one hand it stimulates failing sensuality and passes into decadent perversions; on the other hand, refining æsthetic perceptions, it strives to complicate its forms and embellish them by various petty devices. All this has been observed in history more than once at the decay of different cultures—the Oriental, Antique, and Feudal; and it can be observed during the last decades in connection with the decay of bourgeois culture. The greater part of the new currents in art is included in the decadent "modernism" and "futurism." Russian bourgeois art in 1917 was dragging along behind European art like our anæmic and flabby bourgeoisie itself, which tended to wither without having ever bloomed.

It is necessary to learn the technique of art, not from these organisers of the decadence of life, but from the great masters of the arts, who came at the period of the rise and flowering of the classes now decaying—the revolutionary romanticists and the classics of different times. From the "latest" one may learn some small details, in which they are frequently very skilful, but even in that one should be careful not to become contaminated by the germs of decay.

The simplicity and purity of the forms of our great masters, Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Nekrassov, and Tolstoy, correspond best to the tasks of the new culture. Of course, the new contents will inevitably work out new forms; but it is necessary to start with the best of the past.

In its first steps our workers' poetry manifested a tendency to regular rhythmic verse with simple rhymes. At present it manifests a tendency to free rhythms and complicated new and frequently unexpected rhymes. This is clearly the influence of the modern poetry of the intellectuals. It is doubtful whether it should be encouraged. The new forms are more difficult. The labour of mastering them implies an unnecessary expenditure of energy, which detracts from the more important task of working out and developing the artistic contents.

Let there even be a certain amount of monotony in regularity. It has its justification in life. The worker at the factory lives in a

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kingdom of regular rhythm—simple elementary rhyme. In the " steel chaos " of machines and motors, the waves of varying, but on the whole mechanically regular, rhythms are intermingled with each other; further, the continuity of the smaller repetitions is crossed by rarer and heavier repetitions (as by cæsura or rhyme in verse). These sounds with their constant repetitions forge out the measured word-images, in which the worker with an artistic nature strives to clothe his emotions.

Later on, when the worker has an opportunity to absorb the rhythms of living Nature, where there is less repetition and regularity, this monotony will disappear naturally. But to overcome it by imitating the poets of a strange environment and atmosphere is an unnecessary task, which only increases difficulties that are already numerous.

The most difficult form for the new poetry is the prose-poem. While dispensing with rhyme and any obvious rhythm, it demands a stricter rhythm of images, and at the same time a sufficient harmony of sound combination. These demands are not fulfilled to a sufficient degree in the work of A. Gastev, *The Poetry of the Workers' Blow*, where most are prose poems. In this is manifested the inexperience of young creative work, which follows the most difficult ways, perhaps for the simple reason that it is not quite aware of the actual difficulties. Our criticism may assist in saving artistic efforts by explaining the hidden difficulties of different forms—a question which is not dealt with in the old theory of art.

Step by step our criticism will create a new theory of art which will include also all the variety of the experience of the old criticism, but revised and systematised anew on the basis of the higher universally organisational viewpoint.

It should be noted that in some cases the criticism of form cannot be separated from the criticism of the content ; as a matter of fact they become fused with each other. This is so especially in the question of artistic symbols. Such a symbol is a living image which serves as a kind of designation for a whole series of other images connected with it; it is a means of introducing them to the mind simultaneously and in an organised manner. Thus the Ghost of Hamlet's father is the symbol of the vague echoes of the

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criminal deed, which gradually spread through the society concerned and disclosed the secret. The "Great City" in Verhaeren's *Dawn* is the symbol of the whole organisation of capitalist society. But being a living image, and not only a naked designation, such symbols have their own contents, which are, moreover, depicted in the first place. The Ghost is a spirit, the Great City some capital town. These contents are themselves subjected to all the rules of art and the corresponding criticisms. If, for instance, the Ghost of Hamlet's father behaved in a fashion unlike that in which ghosts are supposed to conduct themselves in the fancy of the people, then it would be grossly inartistic. The *Blue Bird*, of Maeterlinck, notwithstanding its deep idea, would not have become a great work of art if the symbols in themselves had not formed a beautiful, harmonious fairy tale, appealing immediately to children.

Of course our criticism should consider the symbols from this side, beginning with the very selection of the symbols.

Our cruel and coarse times—the epoch of militarism in action—sometimes prompt our artists to use cruel and coarse symbols. A worker fiction writer, in order to give strong and acute expression to the idea of renouncing everything personal in the name of the great collective cause, will symbolise this by having the hero murder the woman he loves. Our criticism points out that this kind of symbol is inadmissible; it contradicts the very idea of collectivism; for the collectivist, a woman is not merely a source of personal happiness, but a real or potential member of that same collectivity. Or, for instance, one enthusiastic poet, in his desire to express readiness to struggle against the old world to the end, without stopping even before the greatest and most fearful sacrifices, threatens:—

> In the name of our To-morrow we will burn Raphael,
> Destroy the museums, tread down the flowers of art.

In connection with this, one reviewer remarked quite correctly but too mildly that "this is not ideology, but psychology," *i.e.*, that the poet, while submitting to the impetus of his own feeling, has forgotten the social organising rôle of art. This is a symbol which might appeal to a soldier, but never to a worker. A soldier

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may and should shell Rheims Cathedral if there is or if there is supposed to be an observation point of the enemy in one of its towers. But what makes a poet select this Hindenburgian image? The poet can only be sorry for such a cruel necessity, never praise it. When creative work itself follows the current to such a degree, then it does not elevate it. The proletariat should never forget the co-operation of generations, which is not at all the same as the co-operation of the classes at the present time. The proletariat should not forget the respect we owe to the great dead who trod smooth the way for us, who bequeathed us their spirits, and from their graves extend to us their helping hand in our striving to this ideal.

In the questions of the forms of art, as well as in those of its contents, our criticism should constantly remind the artist of his responsible rôle as organiser of the living forces of a great collectivity.

Criticism regulates the life of art, not only in its creative aspect, but also in its perception. It explains art to the wide masses, it points out to men what and how they should take from art for the arrangement of their lives.

In respect to the art of the old world this is the only task of our criticism, for we are unable to regulate its development. But in respect to our new art, both tasks are equally important.

It is not only a matter of disclosing the meaning of the symbols when they are difficult to understand, or explaining what is hidden behind the images—things that the artist himself may find difficulty in formulating. It is not a simple question of drawing conclusions which the artist perhaps was unable to express clearly. Criticism should also point out the new problems that arise from the results attained by each work, and the new possibilities which go with them. And the most important thing is that criticism should introduce each work of art into the whole class culture of the masses, into the general scheme of proletarian relationship towards life. In living images it should find and point out the universal scope of the all-organisational standpoint.

This is the way that our criticism must follow in order itself to become creative work.

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The World of Labour

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INTERNATIONAL

Peasant Congress

A GROUP of peasants who were present at the Moscow Agricultural Exhibition in the summer of this year decided to summon an International Congress of working peasants. The Congress met in Moscow on October 10. There were more than one hundred delegates present from peasants' organisations in twenty countries. All the European countries were represented except Italy, England, and Ireland. There were delegates present representing American farmers' organisations; and a delegate from Mexico.

The political complexion of the Congress was essentially non-party. There were very few Communists among the delegates.

The Agenda of the Congress included the following points :—

(1) The struggle against war.
(2) The situation confronting the peasantry in capitalist countries.
(3) The results of the agrarian revolution in Russia.
(4) Peasants' co-operatives in Russia and other countries.
(5) Closer relations between the peasantry and the working class.

Zinoviev was invited to address the Congress, and welcomed the proposal to set up a Peasant International. He reported that Lenin, who is now convalescent, displayed particular interest in the movement for the creation of a Peasant International, considering it as an event of the utmost significance.

The Congress discussions found expression in a manifesto addressed to the working peasants of all countries from which we take the following extracts :—

> Brothers and comrades ! Since primeval times we have been winning the fruits of the soil at the price of heavy labour. At first we did this in free comradeship : each for all and all for each. The land was free ; forest and meadow, hunting and fishing, belonged to each and all. But the power seized by the nobility robbed us of our freedom, degraded us into slaves. For a thousand years we bore the yoke. Then came the emancipation of the peasantry. But this brought us no relief from serfdom. We were robbed of our rights to forest and meadow, hunting and fishing. Broad tracts of the best land remained the property of the great landowners, whose sole activity consisted in extorting high rents from us, in leading the lives of feudal lords, and in hunting over our fields.

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Now a new race of lords has sprung up beside the old: the capitalists. And these too live by preying on us. They join together in cartels and trusts in order that they may force high prices on us. In autumn the speculators come and buy up our crops at low prices, to sell them again in the spring at double the price they paid. In America the high tariffs of the railroads deprive the farmers of half their income. On every side we are encompassed by deceit, usury, robbery. In the colonial countries the broad peasant masses are impoverished beneath the predatory yoke of foreign imperialist capitalism.

The large landowners and capitalists are backed up by the bourgeois State with its hosts of officials and police, its cliques of army officers. A mighty organisation opposes us. It forces our sons to fill its barracks, it carries on wars of plunder, and wars for the division of plunder, in which wars we working peasants are driven in millions to our deaths . . . .

The working peasantry is beginning to awaken at last, it is beginning to realise that it must no longer entrust its fate to the landlords and capitalists. It has already attempted to organise parties in various countries, and to seize State power. But it has not yet struck the right path. It has attempted to govern in collaboration with its enemy, with the ruling class; but the cunning business politicians of the ruling class have outwitted, corrupted, and bought the leaders of the peasantry. The peasants' parties have thus been tools of the ruling class instead of weapons aiding the working peasants in their struggle. In Bulgaria, where the peasantry attempted to seize power for itself alone, it was taken by surprise by a small band of conspirators, one-time officers and rulers. The peasants were driven from their position of power and crushed; thousands of them were thrown into prison or murdered.

The peasantry cannot wield State power, either in co-operation with the ruling classes or alone. If it is to rule, it must have an honest ally in the towns, for in the modern State the centre of power is in the towns. They that rule the towns rule the country. But the working peasant lives in the village, his companions are scattered over the fields. His honest ally in the town—this is the working class, which suffers as much from exploitation by the ruling class as does the peasantry. But the working class of the towns, dependent on its own resources, is too weak to carry on a victorious fight against the bourgeois State. The workers in the towns and the peasantry must fight together for their joint victory . . . .

Hitherto the ruling classes have adopted the successful tactics of inciting peasants and town workers against one another. They have persuaded the peasantry that increased power on the part of the workers would imply that more land would be taken from the peasants, that property would be divided, all liberties suppressed. We have been able to convince ourselves with our own eyes, in the Workers' and Peasants' State of Russia, that all these assertions are falsehoods. The peasants of Russia have not only retained their land but they have received that of the former great landowners as well. They enjoy perfect liberty. Their property is protected, they can sell their products without restriction. They administer the affairs of their villages by means of their own Soviets. Nobody offends their national feelings, or interferes with them in the exercise of their religion. Emancipated from Tsarist, landowning, and capitalist oppression, they are co-operating with the town workers to become free, creative, and cultured human beings. We must follow their example . . . .

You must emancipate yourselves from the dictatorship of the ruling class. You must learn to regard the workers as your allies and comrades in the struggle. You must fight together with them to crush the power of the ruling class, and to establish the Workers' and Peasants' Government all over the world.

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An additional appeal was addressed to the poor peasants in the colonial countries. Emphasis was laid on the misery of their position and the intensity of their exploitation at the hands both of capitalist imperialism and the native ruling classes. The need for a common struggle side by side with the workers and peasants of the mother countries was stressed : " Pariahs of the colonies, unite ! "

An International Peasants' Council has been set up to carry on work in the spirit of the Congress manifesto. It contains representatives of every country present at the Congress, with power to add to its number as organisations in fresh countries affiliate. The secretary is Smirnov, Russian People's Commissar for Agriculture.

GERMANY

The Political Situation

THE last month in Germany has seen chiefly victories for the counter-revolution. On October 29-30 the Saxon Workers' Government was overthrown by the Reichswehr under General Müller. One or two prominent Social Democrats visited Dresden and succeeded in persuading several Social Democratic deputies to break the united front : a new coalition government was formed, comprising the Social Democrats and the bourgeois Centre Parties. The left-wing Social Democrats, like Zeigner, Premier in the Workers' Government, were not equal to the occasion. At the Chemnitz Works Councils Conference they advised against an immediate general strike.

A few days after the *coup d'état* in Saxony the Social Democrats, their task accomplished, resigned from the Great Coalition. A Fascist dictatorship now appears to be imminent. Negotiations between Stresemann and the Nationalists have been proceeding for some time, so far without final success. Already there have been a succession of separatist *coups* throughout the Rhineland. The separatists are most obviously in the pay of France, and, as one of their proclamations said, their intention was to free the Rhineland from any " radical " or left-wing movements among the masses of the population. A Fascist *putsch* in Bavaria has failed because of a quarrel in the Fascist ranks.

Stinnes and other big industrialists, Thyssen and Krupp, are openly fighting for the ten-hour day. Stinnes has locked out all the workers at one of his concerns, and has refused to take any back except on the ten-hour-day basis. Meanwhile, the negotiations in the Ruhr between the industrialists and the French continue.

An isolated workers' rising at Hamburg was crushed after many days' severe street fighting. Rumours of impending civil war are continuous. The Thuringian Workers' Government still stands at the time of writing, but a coup similar to that performed in Saxony is being prepared against it.

The ruin and degradation of the Social Democratic Party is now complete. Mr. Robert Dell, the *New Statesman* correspondent, who was quoted in these notes last month, wrote, immediately after the Saxon *coup d'état* :—

> Should there be a general strike in Saxony I suppose *Vorwärts* and the Socialist and Trade Union leaders would do their best to wreck it. *Vorwärts* is doing its utmost to wreck the United Front where it exists and prevent it where it does not . . . . The once great German Socialist Party is, indeed,

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a sorry spectacle. Cowardice, self-seeking, and corruption have done their work, and the rank and file drift helpless, like a rudderless ship.

Communist Tactics

In face of the changed situation, the tactics of the Communist Party are of the first importance. Accordingly we reproduce a special circular issued by the Central Executive of the Party at the end of October :—

Thanks to the treachery of the left-wing Social Democrats, who united with the right wing and the Federation of Trade Unions (A.D.G.B.) on the occasion of the dissolution of the Saxon Workers' Government by the Reich, the fighting strength of the united working-class front—which had just been achieved—was weakened to such a degree that it was necessary once more to draw back from the decisive struggle. The left-wing Social Democrats and the trade union bureaucracy, in thus aiding the reaction, did their work thoroughly. The working class was faced with the alternative, either to go into battle disunited, divided, and risking defeat, or to avoid a decisive action in order to re-establish, as quickly as possible, the fighting front that the Social Democratic leaders had broken. This last to be done in spite of these leaders, or with new leaders chosen from among the Social Democratic rank and file. It is generally recognised that the left-wing Social Democratic leaders shirked a fight : in Saxony, the Zeigner group, the so-called " left " in Thuringia, the whole of the Berlin District Executive. But it is also recognised that these left-wing leaders still possess the confidence of the revolutionary-minded Social Democratic workers, of which they took advantage.

The Chemnitz Conference, where the left-wing Social Democratic leaders succeeded in obstructing the vote of a resolution declaring for an immediate general strike, is an excellent example of this. In the same way the left-wing Social Democratic leaders at Berlin have even yet been able to prevent the formation of a Committee of Action to prepare for the struggle.

The military strength of the enemy has now reached its climax. There are, however, certain factors making for disunity, such as the opposition between Bavaria and the Reich. This is essentially an opposition within the ranks of the militarists—the von Seeckt group on one side, the Ludendorff group on the other.

To enter on a decisive struggle with the working class divided in two against an adversary who is still united and who has achieved the maximum of his military strength would be an historical catastrophe of the first order. It would bring certain and final defeat, not only to the German, but also to the Russian Revolution. On the other hand, victory is assured if we prepare the way for the attack by uniting beforehand the forces of the working class by propaganda and partial actions, and by dividing the forces of the enemy. Every member of the Party must understand that in the present situation the political general strike means the struggle for power, and consequently armed insurrection, which we must carry through without a pause till the enemy is completely crushed—under pain of being completely crushed ourselves.

This being so, there can be no half-measures. We know that the enemy are relying on an attack from our side without sufficient military or political preparation. The enemy know that time is working against them. Time works for us if we use it with the greatest energy, rapidity, and foresight in order to complete the political, technical, and organising preparations for the decisive struggle.

The time left to us is clearly very short. Party members must use all their efforts to re-establish the United Front which had been achieved.

The Social Democratic workers must be completely separated from their present left-wing leaders, or else they must choose new left-wing leaders able and ready for action.

We must secure that a number of these left-wing leaders will join with us in proclaiming the general strike. Otherwise, if we proclaim it ourselves, supported by

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the Works Councils and the Committees of Action, these left-wing leaders must be already discredited and we must sufficiently possess the confidence of the working class to lead it into action as a solid phalanx.

Our chief tasks are :—

(1) To negotiate locally, regionally, and nationally with the Federation of Trade Unions (A.D.G.B.), the Federation of Officials' Union (A.D.B.), the Clerical Workers' Federation (Afa-Bund), and the Social Democratic Party, with, as a common objective, the struggle for bread and against Bavarian reaction, and the preparation of the general strike.

(2) To strengthen and improve, with the utmost energy, our technical preparations and our organisation. To this end, we must put ourselves in a position to take part in all the partial day-to-day conflicts, which are increasing in number, and in which we must take the lead, so that we can use them as a basis for the decisive struggle. We must show the greatest activity in all spontaneous conflicts. We must make the Party firm by establishing it on an illegal basis of the utmost strictness, and by taking part in the whole wide movement of the masses.

(3) To gain the active support, or to neutralise, the petty bourgeois elements who are divided chiefly among the Fascist organisations, the Reichswehr, and the police.

The decisive struggle can only begin on a rising wave of spontaneous mass conflicts, in which we must take part, and which we must lead and organise. Inevitably, there will be isolated local conflicts, looting, &c. We have not to oppose these, but to consider coolly and precisely just how far we can go without being prematurely defeated.

The most important slogans and demands to be put forward in these revolutionary skirmishes must be :—

(1) Payment of wages in dollars (*i.e.*, in the currency in which prices are quoted). Economic relief.

(2) Provision of food products. Confiscation of the stocks of the big wholesalers, millers, and landowners. Distribution by the co-operatives, by small traders' associations, by the Control Commissions.

(3) Defence of the eight-hour day.

(4) Distribution of bread and other foods and fuel to the unemployed, to children, to the aged.

(5) Re-opening of shut-down factories, to be set going again by the Works Councils with the help of credits from the State.

(6) (*a*) The struggle against Bavarian reaction, the withdrawal of the Reichswehr from Saxony, the raising of the state of siege.
(*b*) Confiscation of the wealth of those capitalists who sabotage production.
(*c*) Imprisonment of the big capitalist traitors, Stinnes & Co. Trial by a People's Court.

(7) Liquidation of the Great Coalition. Formation of a Workers' and Small Peasants' Government.

Hamburg must be an outstanding example to the Party of what not to do. As a result of the treachery of the Social Democrats our comrades at Hamburg allowed themselves to be isolated. Hamburg was a genuine wide mass action. But it had been insufficiently prepared, and, beside a well-armed enemy, there were found yet against us important sections of Social Democratic workers. The example of Hamburg shows that we must not neglect to exploit thoroughly the sabotage of the treacherous Social Democratic leaders, and to consolidate the mass forces, in order not to sacrifice uselessly the *élite* of the working class. Hamburg has been and is an episode which should not discourage us, in spite of the local set-back, if we can draw from it a political lesson for the whole of Germany.

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CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

Miners' Strike

THIS strike was essentially a continuation of the big coal strike in the spring of this year. Like that strike, the struggle began, and centred in, the Ostrau-Karwin coalfield. At the beginning of July a meeting of mineowners in the Ostrau-Karwin field announced that they found themselves under the necessity of "regulating" afresh the wages of miners and workers in the cokeries. As the time approached for the expiry of the latest collective agreement, they put forth a demand for a 30 per cent. wage reduction. This was refused by the miners. After the mediation of certain Social Democratic leaders, in the manner of certain Labour Party leaders in this country, the employers reduced their demand to 18 per cent. Even this, according to the *Daily Herald* Prague correspondent, would have meant sheer starvation for the miners.

The National Conference of the miners, meeting on August 16, rejected also the reduced demand, and decided on a general strike, in all the coalfields of the country, for August 20. The strikers numbered 120,000.

It became apparent from the first that the attack of the mineowners was part of a general capitalist offensive. The mineowners were acting in close accord with the Czecho-Slovak Federation of Industries. The large agrarian capitalists were also involved, knowing that wage reductions in industry would enable them to launch a successful attack on the agricultural workers and the small peasantry.

The revolutionary Trade Unions, especially the International (*i.e.*, German and Czech) All-Trade Union Federation, endeavoured to widen the front. The national question, as always in Czecho-Slovakia, proved to be a serious bar to genuinely united working-class action. There are three miners' Unions, for instance, the Czech Social Democratic Union, the Czech Nationalist Union, and the German Union, which had only been forced by economic stress to form some sort of a coalition.

Meanwhile, the Social Democratic leaders were continuing their work of mediation. Hampel, a Social Democrat, Secretary of the Metalworkers' Union and President of the General Council of Czecho-Slovak Trade Unions, entered into conversations with the Minister of Labour, also a Social Democrat, in order to bring about some compromise settlement. The result of these efforts was that the mineowners proposed a 10 per cent. wage reduction in the Ostrau-Karwin field and proportional reductions in other fields. After the refusal of this offer, Hampel again used his good offices with the Government and the mineowners, this time for a proposal of gradual wage reductions, spread over a period. This, too, came to nothing.

The strike was by this time six weeks old, and the feeling was growing among the workers that some effective assistance should be given by the rest of the Trade Union movement to the miners in their struggle. Accordingly, a conference of the Central Committees of all Trade Unions was called for September 27. At the same time the International All-Trade Union Federation made several proposals to the central strike committee on this point of aid for the striking miners, including a proposal for a general strike of transport and

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metal workers. On October 1 representatives of the Trade Union Central Committees and the railwaymen's organisations held a conference with the central strike committee. It was unanimously resolved to bring pressure to bear on the Government and to make a general appeal for financial aid for the miners on strike. The railwaymen were to decide for themselves what further action they thought necessary.

A temporary lull had taken place in the mediatory efforts of the Social Democrats. This was, perhaps, not unconnected with the municipal elections, and the natural desire to refrain from any action which might alienate the working-class vote. (It is noteworthy that the chief successes of the Social Democrats were in mining districts.) Once the elections were over, however, mediation again came to the fore. Hampel again took the lead : and this time his efforts were successful.

The final proposals of the Government and the mineowners included the following wage reductions : 13 per cent. in the Ostrau-Karwin field ; 12 per cent. in the Rositz-Pilsen and Schatzar fields ; 10 per cent. in the Teplitz and Carlsbad fields ; and 9 per cent. in the Kladno field. There was to be no victimisation. Work was to be resumed on October 8-9. The new agreement was to remain in force till May 31, 1924.

At the National Conference of miners held to consider these proposals the Social Democrats adopted a frankly defeatist position. They declared that no better terms could be extracted from the Government, which was obdurate, and that there was no hope of any assistance from the rest of the Trade Union movement. Only the Communist delegates opposed this view. The Conference decided to accept defeat, by 58 votes to 13.

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE COLLAPSE OF THE COLE INDUSTRY

Labour in the Coal Mining Industry. By G. D. H. Cole. (Published on behalf of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace by Humphrey Milford at the Clarendon Press, Oxford.)

TEN years ago the miners were in the forefront of the Labour Movement. They were far the best organised section of the workers. They had gained certain alterations in their conditions which were still being unsuccessfully demanded, if demanded at all, by many other sections of the workers. Their national organisation, the Miners' Federation, had been rapidly becoming not merely a defensive organisation but a force of revolutionary significance. The minority movements had already become well recognised as the units responsible for effecting and maintaining this change in outlook. Capitalism had been forced to grant higher wages, shorter hours, and minimum working conditions and capitalism knew that the miners were moving forward to demand yet more drastic concessions. Nor were the miners forgetful of the fact that it was not by their own strength alone that they, a section of the workers, could move forward. It was at their instance that the Triple Industrial Alliance was formed and it was they who pressed forward demands which were afterwards adopted by the whole Labour Movement. Their resolutions on nationalisation, their demands for more adequate pensions for old age pensioners, are but instances of this fact. They were, in fact, the spearhead of the movement.

Yet to-day the miners are faced with starvation. They are not out of work, but they are faced with starvation. Their national organisation is there, is larger numerically, it may be, but is useless, powerless, divided, and defeated. Districts are set against districts, pits against pits, workers against workers. There is still the minimum wage, but the miners are cheated of it. There are still safety regulations, but they are broken in every case. There are still check-weighers, but they are prevented from carrying out their functions. The seven-hour day is the law, but miners are compelled to work eight, nine, or even ten hours a day. Workers are victimised with impunity ; they are evicted from their homes ; they are cheated, oppressed, murdered, and treated like slaves, like dogs.

Yesterday, ten years ago, the miners were the strength of the working-class movement ; to-day they are its weakness. This is the terrible situation that the movement has to face. How has it happened ?

When war was declared, the capitalists were uncertain of the attitude of the miners. Their strength was a source of concern to the Government. They were alternatively vilified and cajoled. Their leaders succumbed to the cajolery ; the minority movements were swamped by the wave of patriotism. The industry became controlled, was in a privileged position, was vitally necessary for the success of the war. Then came the armistice ; their leaders were there to lead, but they let themselves be sideracked into the by-paths of the Coal Commission, dazzled by its limelit avenues. The industry was

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still in a privileged position, it still possessed a monopoly in the export trade. But the leaders had forsaken their class in order to win the war for the capitalists; they had again forsaken it in order to make peace safe for the capitalists. Then came the attacks of the capitalists; the blows fell on an already defeated organisation. The leaders had compromised themselves at home, they were willing to compromise themselves abroad: they demanded that the workers of Europe should be exploited by maintaining export prices in order to increase the profits of their employers at home. They supported the International of the Capitalists, the League of Nations; they demanded for their own capitalists reparations from the German workers. This they did, and thus did they forsake their class, both at home and abroad.

But Mr. Cole, what does he say? He professes to write a book which will "recount the facts and not moralise over them"; he states that he has aimed "not at a definite interpretation of the events, but at a simple narration which will provide material for the interpreter." He talks of the "collapse of the industry itself."

What does he mean? Mr. Cole, like the leaders of the miners, has forsaken the working class. He speaks of the collapse of the industry. Yet to-day exports are now far above the pre-war level; production has reached that level. Is that "a collapse of the industry itself"? Higher and ever higher profits are being disclosed by colliery companies, and higher and ever higher dividends are paid. Is that "a collapse of the industry itself"? The miners have been beaten down to an unexampled degradation, but the mine owners are making "record" profits. Does that imply "a collapse of the industry itself"? Mr. Cole has forgotten the class issue. The class issue in the mining industry to-day is displayed in all its naked brutality.

What attitude does this lack of appreciation of the class issue, of the existence of a class struggle, force Mr. Cole continually to adopt? He is continually betraying a lack of analysis not only of events but of his own phrases. For instance, when in 1916 the South Wales miners were trying to obtain increased wages to meet the huge rises in the cost of living, Mr. Cole with incredible insolence accuses the miners of "pig-headedness"—an accusation made more incredible by the admission on the same page that during this period "the South Wales coalowners were making very high profits." Then Mr. Cole with the true journalistic outlook of the Rothermere type refers to the fact that "public opinion" was against the miners (p. 46) and further on "that the industrial position was exceedingly threatening" (p. 75). Mr. Cole, in the face of the miners' leadership of the Labour Movement before the war, described the miners (p. 7) "as narrow and slow to understand others" or to feel the "influence of outside public opinion." Mr. Cole makes definite controversial statements in spite of the fact of his professed desire to be impartial. For instance, he states that the Yorkshire dispute "confused the public mind in relation to the issues arising out of the Sankey report" (whatever "the public mind" may be). On page 174 he gives the impression that decontrol even at the time it was effected was of no advantage to the owners and on page 244 he refers to the "premature removal of Government control" (as if the miners' conditions in Great Britain, Germany, India, or South Africa would not have been as they are to-day if the British Government

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had returned to capitalism control over the British mining industry six months or a year later than it actually did).

Finally, true to the objects of this series, which are laid down in the Editor's Preface as providing "an institution dedicated to the cause of international peace," Mr. Cole so far forgets his impartiality as to declare, in almost the same breath as he affirms this impartiality (p. 243), that "the decline of the past two years, far more than the apparent prosperity of the preceding period, is the real outcome of war . . . Opinions differ in the apportioning of blame for this or that incident of the calamity, but the calamity as a whole is the fruit of war" (p. 244).

Such is the nature of opportunist research. Mr. Cole has collected an enormous amount of facts together in a book of 243 pages and appendices of 20 pages more. But, after all his labour, the only remedy he suggests—and he obviously suggests it with the full sense of his responsibility—is that the Labour Movement should demonstrate against war. While Mr. Cole is walking in the processions of the National Peace Council, miners are being forced down to the position of slaves in every country, are being evicted, starved, broken, defeated, and murdered, not by war, but by the bloody greed of capitalists.

H. P. R.

TEMPERING THE WIND

If Labour Rules. By Philip Snowden. (Labour Publishing Co. 1s.)

THE economic situation in this country is one which hardly requires any deep analysis. Taking full advantage of the opportunities which developed in the war and after the war, capitalism has tightened its stranglehold on the workers. It has increased the burden of taxes on necessaries, it has reduced production in order to maintain profits, and thereby it has thrown a million and a-half workers out of employment and weakened the workers' organisations. Then it has proceeded to relentless wage reductions, using the State machinery to break down all resistance by the workers. Meanwhile, British capitalism has used British workers to serve its ends in Mesopotamia, in Africa, in India, Egypt, Ireland, and Germany, with the double object of making those countries safe for capital and at the same time keeping down the workers' standard of living, so that they can in turn be used to depress still further the standards of British workers. Throughout the world the class struggle stands out as the one issue that matters, the destruction of capitalism as the one aim of the workers.

The political situation in this country is ripening quickly, taking its character from the economic situation. Mr. Snowden himself realises that the openly capitalist Governments will soon be unable to withstand the pressure of the masses. Tory and Liberal must give way to Labour. And it is at this point that Mr. Snowden steps into the ring to stay Labour's hand from dealing the final blow.

The Labour Party, Mr. Snowden explains, is dominated by Mensheviks: "a Labour Government would not be a class Government." Mr. Snowden's

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contempt for the workers is openly expressed: he apologises for their wanting to free themselves on the ground that they know no better:—

> Men who have been roused to a consciousness of the injustices they suffer, especially when they have little education and have had their experiences confined within a narrow horizon, are apt to be violent in their denunciation and uncompromising in their demands.

Mr. Snowden, having enjoyed much education and wide experiences, knows better: his demands are exceedingly compromising. His ideal Labour Government will "wholly subordinate class interests"; inconvenient class resolutions might be passed by the Party conference; but "no Labour Government could be hidebound . . . . . Conference resolutions are not Parliamentary bills." As for what Mr. Snowden's Labour Government *will* do, Mr. Snowden is quite clear that national interests demand public ownership of land, mines, railways, &c. But, of course, Mr. Snowden's Labour Government will pay the present owners, or will let them go on drawing interest and dividends just as before. In other words, it will make a gesture which it hopes will deceive the workers, but which will leave capitalism entrenched more firmly than ever.

What about the Capital Levy? It is something rather more than a gesture. Therefore, Mr. Snowden's Labour Government would not really insist on it: if it could persuade the capitalists that the Levy would be for their good, the Levy would be imposed; but, says Mr. Snowden:—

> If, *of course*, the commercial classes, and those who would have to contribute to a Capital Levy, will not have it . . . . a Labour Government would have to look in other directions than the Capital Levy for revenue to enable the food taxes to be removed.

So Mr. Snowden passes on from subject to subject, describing with accurate touch the rôle of his Labour Government. It would be anti-national; if it opposed war, this would only be because it honestly believed that the country wouldn't get anything out of it; it would feel to the full the responsibilities of Empire. It would, in a word, try to save capitalism for as long as possible from the wrath to come.

Is Mr. Snowden's view of the rôle of a Labour Government justified? Mr. Snowden himself has no doubts: although not the official spokesman of the Labour Party, he has, he says, "long been associated with it" and "knows its mind and heart."

It is well that the rank and file of the Labour Party should realised the rôle which their leaders have accepted for the first Labour Government. And we thank Mr. Snowden for his candid admission that "the extremists" in the Labour ranks will be the greatest difficulty for such a Government: for the masses will not lightly be turned aside from their objective.

E. B.

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PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

The Man of To-Morrow: J. Ramsay MacDonald. By "Iconoclast." (Leonard Parsons and Independent Labour Party Publication Department. I.L.P., cheap edition, 3s. 6d.)

An Outline of Economic Geography. Plebs Text Books No. 4. (Plebs League, 2s. 6d.)

State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand. II volumes (second impression). By the Hon. W. Pember Reeves. (Allen and Unwin, 21s.)

The Philosophy of Nietzsche. By Professor A. Wolf, M.A., D.Lit. Studies in Economics and Political Science, No. 45. New Edition. (Allen and Unwin, 5s.)

Labour and the Industrial Revolution. By E. C. Fairchild. (Allen and Unwin, 3s. 6d.)

Political Crime. A Critical Essay on the Law and its Administration in Cases of a Certain Type. By Wilfred George Carlton Hall, B.C.L., M.A. (Allen and Unwin, 4s. 6d.)

Der Verband der Sozialistischen Sowjetrepubliken. I. P. Trainin. (Verlag Carl Hoym Nachf. Louis Cahnbley, Hamburg.)

Manual for Leaders of Children's Groups. By Edward Hoernle. (Young Communist International.)

Home and the School. The Story of Indian Life and Education. By Professor M. M. Gidvani, M.A. (Sunshine Publishing House, Bombay, Rs.1-8.)

Export Credit Schemes and Anglo-Russian Trade. By W. P. Coates. With a Preface by Arthur Ponsonby. (National "Hands off Russia" Committee.)

Present Position of Anglo-Russian Relations (November, 1923). By W. P. Coates. With a Preface by H. N. Brailsford. (National "Hands off Russia" Committee.)

The Child's Right and Prohibition. A Post Liquordom Inquiry. By Guy Hayler, (President of the World Prohibition Federation. Templar Printing Works, Birmingham, 1d.)

Money Based on the World's Goods. By C. H. Chomley (The *British-Australasian*, 6d.)

Science and Sanctity: A Study in the Scientific Approach to Unity. By Victor Branford. (Leplay House, and Williams and Norgate, 10s. 6d.)

Sankaracharya the Great and his Successors in Kanchi. By Professor N. Venkata Raman, M.A. (Ganesh & Co., Madras. Rs.1-8.)

The Lord of the Nations. (*Yoga of the Nations* Series. Vol. II.) By Paul Richard. Translation revised by E. S. Stokes. (Ganesh & Co., Madras. Rs.1-8.)

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THE LABOUR MONTHLY

1924 *Reduced Subscription Rates*

The proprietors of THE LABOUR MONTHLY have much pleasure in announcing a reduction in subscription rates starting as from the January, 1924, issue. A considerable saving on postage costs has been effected by the purchase of a higher grade feather-weight "antique wove" text paper, which, while maintaining the same bulk as heretofore, weighs less. It is proposed to pass the entire benefit on to subscribers, and the post-free terms for the British Isles are accordingly reduced from 8/- *per annum* and *pro rata* to :

ONE YEAR : 7s. 0d.
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(A subscription form is provided in this issue on page 375)

BOUND VOLUMES

The Management regret any inconvenience caused by delay in the binding of Volume IV; this has now been overcome and all orders will shortly be fulfilled.

Volume V (July to December, 1923) will also be ready in a few weeks, and can be supplied for 7s. 6d. post free (cases 3s. 6d.). Or these numbers can be bound and returned post-free for 4s. 6d.

The title page for Volume V is now being printed and can be had on application if 1½d. for postage is sent. The index is included in this number.

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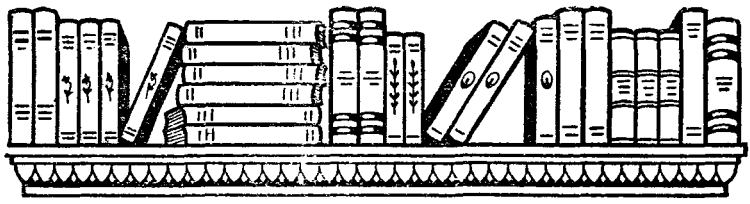

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